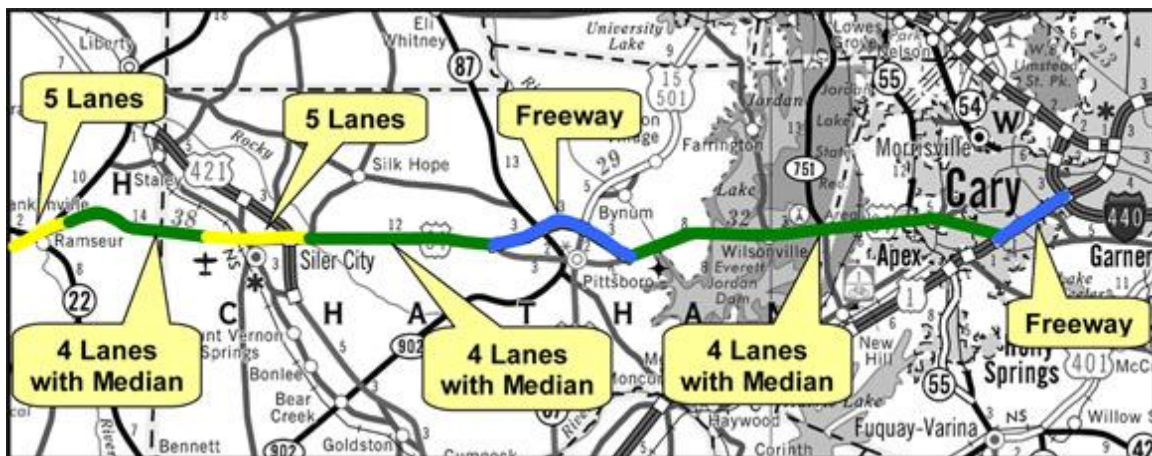


Development of SHC

The SHC concept stems from the practice of long-range systems planning. Since the 1960s, systems planning studies have been conducted in local and regional areas throughout North Carolina. These studies have been valuable, and have helped communities understand growth and better plan for transportation improvements. However, study recommendations typically stop at planning area borders, which are usually just beyond city limits or county boundaries. In addition, decisions made in the project development and planning process typically focused on the limits of the project itself. NCDOT lacked a broader, statewide vision for how to ensure continuity and consistency for travel flow between these planning areas, communities, and in the development of projects. The lack of a corridor vision resulted in the construction of inconsistent corridor segments - as illustrated in Figure 1-4 below. The SHC concept represents the first step towards "connecting the dots" and promoting a more consistent transportation service for North Carolina's citizens, as illustrated in Figure 1-4 for US 64 in central North Carolina.

Figure 1-4. Variations in Roadway Cross-Sections along US 64 in Central North Carolina



The development of this concept began in 2002 and continued to evolve over time into a statewide initiative. From the beginning, the concept was shaped by sound technical criteria, planning and operational considerations, historical transportation studies, and the establishment of relevant goals and future applications. Work centered on the need for NCDOT and its stakeholders to consider planning from a broader perspective, with a specific focus on maximizing the mobility of "core" highway facilities within North Carolina's transportation system. NCDOT invited citizens and rural/municipal planners to participate in the effort, as well as a host of state and federal regulatory and resource agencies. The NCDENR and NC Department of Commerce agreed to partner and participate in the public involvement process.

Between November 2003 and January 2004, NCDOT staff held a series of nine public meetings throughout North Carolina in three geographic areas (west, central, and east), where the SHC concept was shared with stakeholders to gather their reactions in order